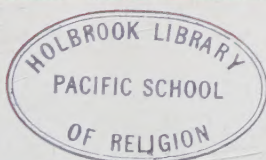


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SOCIAL

ACTION



Outline Of A Working Faith

by

KATHLEEN W. MACARTHUR

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We are indebted to Professor Daniel J. Fleming for the photograph of the Madonna and Child reproduced on page 4. It originally appeared in Professor Fleming's book entitled "Each With His Own Brush," published by Friendship Press, New York.

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A CHALLENGE TO CHRISTIANITY

BY RUTH ISABEL SEABURY

Hungry-hearted men and women are today asking the age-old question, "Lord, what can I do to inherit eternal life?" Even magazine advertisements are calling us to a new recognition of religious values. In this issue of *Social Action*, Miss MacArthur gives socially concerned men and women a spiritual springboard into theology in the language of everyday and to religious groups of the churches, an action guide for testing their faith. Yet none of this will have served its purpose unless we re-think *our own religious concepts* and re-orient for today our *working* faith. We shall add, from our own experience, the concepts which mean most to us, and the ideas which all men of other races and nations have learned about God and life and their fellow men.

One of my friends was trying somewhat confusedly to answer her nine-year-old son's questions about Christmas. She finally said, "I'll take you to talk to our minister. He can explain it." "Mother," he said, "how can he tell me what you think?" "Well, son," she said, "I received a beautiful picture when I was your age about all these things but the color has grown dim and Dr. B—— helps me to brighten it up." He looked at her solemnly and said, "Mother, don't you think by now you ought to be able to paint your own picture?"

Two important discoveries the study of these pages ought to help us make, if we are sincere and willing to think. In the first place, we will realize that there is only one basis for world organization in the future. No one religion, not even Christianity as it is today, is adequate. Only one idea is big enough to make men free from fear of each other; free to work together in brotherhood—that idea is the knowledge that God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe, the Father of all mankind.

Hinduism and Shinto we see to be exclusive for one race or nation. Yet Christianity has often *acted* as if it also were thus conceived. "Your American churches often seem to be more

(Continued on page 6)



MADONNA AND CHILD

The painter, Lé-van-dé, a native of Annam (Indo-China), has studied in Paris, and has recently done some valuable painting in the Vatican.

Still, The Child

Images from the deep past come up to haunt us,
Memories emerge to harrow us and heal;
Names, places, portents, acts accomplished
Live on, live on within our souls
Long after they have left their mark and gone.

Ah, so it is that Christmas with tremulous persistency
Returns again, replenishing our love,
Restoring us to faith and hope, through those protagonists
Who long ago enacted on the tragic human stage
The drama of God's pity and man's plight.

Mary and Joseph, shepherds and wisemen,
Types and counterparts of us who live today,
Coming together for no other purpose
Than to give birth and welcome to a child.

These are ourselves, our very inmost selves,
Visited by angels, led by a star,
Thrilled by some heavenly music,
Drawn to the fateful spot
Where every jar and discord is resolved
In one brief moment of consummate peace.

It is the child who saves us—still the child.
And we in gratitude to him whom Herod sought to slay
Would save all children, homeless, hungry, cold,
From the dark passions of this war-wracked world,
Striving in his behalf to play our part.—
Why should the sword still pierce sad Mary's heart?

—ANONYMOUS

(Continued from page 3)

full of Confucianists or Moslems than of genuine Christians," said a Japanese visitor a few years ago. "I find many Buddhists in your American churches." Whenever the church is used for narrow nationalism, for racial bondage and prejudice, for piety without a cross of dedication to action, it ceases to be the basis of mankind's hope for the future. There must be a World Church, supra-national and purified by suffering, to lift a seeking humanity to realize its sonship of one Father.

The second great service Miss MacArthur renders is in her witness that there is only one technique by which to bring about the redemption of our broken world. That is the way we call the "way of the Cross." It is more than suffering for an ideal; more than the patient bearing of our burden. The Cross must never be a mere symbol on a spire, or a beautiful emblem on a communion table. It is a constant reminder that God is present with us, His spirit leading us steadily toward His Kingdom. "If any man will come after me," said Jesus, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me."

"Yours is the only faith in the world with the power of a congregation," a great Hindu social worker once said to me. "Every religion has God, a prophet, an altar, a worshipper, a priest, a sacrifice and a holy book. Yours is the only one with a congregation and a congregation is never an audience. It is a fellowship made one. I think there is nothing your people could not do once you realize the power of the congregation."

But the "congregation" is not the church as it is today—the "local" church drawn apart from a city or a world. It is, it must be, a fellowship of suffering dedicated to doing God's will; a *World Church*, conscious of its universal responsibility, ready to bear humanity's sin and sorrow, and to heal society's diseases. When we begin even dimly to see that, we of the American churches shall be more nearly ready for our part in tomorrow's world. For we shall come to that world, not proudly in the spirit of an American Century, but humbly and penitently as before a Baby in a Manger who became a Man upon a Cross.

OUTLINE OF A WORKING FAITH

FROM RELIGIOUS IDEAS TO SOCIAL ACTION

BY KATHLEEN W. MacARTHUR

In books on the history of religion, there is a story of a pious Hindu in ancient times who daily performed the ritual of pouring the sacrificial butter on the hearth fire. This Hindu had a playful cat who persistently got in the way, so the good man formed the habit of tying the cat to the bed while he performed the rite. Soon, some of the village folk began to imitate their holy man. Centuries later there was developed a sacred rite of tying the cat to the bed, although the people had long since forgotten the duty of pouring butter on the fire.

Thus, for want of understanding the reason behind the action, meaningless and even harmful practices can become sacred acts.

It is important therefore that we know clearly what the meaning is behind our activities. In other words, that we have religious ideas and see them in their real relation to our social behavior.

The Problem of Language

There was a time in this country when even the least intellectual among us could understand the language of theology, but now we seem afraid of it, we common folk. So many theological terms are unfamiliar today that their meaning is half forgotten or changed or lost. Because of this, we get confused and say that theology is not important. We are learning again to understand that it is important, and that we have to use it more or less all the time. The language of creeds and doctrines, of teaching about God, and sin, and salvation, is once more coming to be used and understood by people who are not theologians. But there is still too much resistance to it to make it as helpful as it might be.

Another more important reason for not using this kind of special language is that people have got into the habit of ignoring what is said in "religious" language and, therefore, of missing the importance of religious ideas. By not paying attention to the ideas because the words seem meaningless or other-worldly, people are led to self-contradiction and inconsistency.

Nothing could illustrate this more clearly than the fact that hundreds of books and pamphlets are coming from the press describing the wrongs and evils of our day and sharply criticizing social, economic and political events. As long as this is done in "religious" language, with broad principles and widely accepted moral exhortations, these documents can say almost anything and criticize any aspect of our national life.

But let someone write of the very same ideas in definite, concrete terms, and it becomes a different matter. There is immediate violent reaction if a Christian writer shows a degree of social intelligence that can indicate, specifically and unobscured by pietistic words, just where injustice is being practiced as among workers, farmers, industrialists, politicians, or any other groups or persons. All of this shows that while we have largely ceased to understand or to use the language of religion in its historical sense, we still trust it more than we do naked social intelligence. Until state, church, business and all leadership generally is cured of this "spiritual squint," this fear of saying plainly what we mean, we cannot hope for much improvement in our admittedly vicious and un-Christian system of things. The first step is to make sure what it is we believe, be able to state it clearly, and then to see whether our actions as socially responsible people bear any resemblance to those beliefs.

TO SERVE THE PRESENT AGE

All the black evils in the world have overflowed their banks,

Yet, oarsmen, take your places with the blessing of sorrow in your souls!

Whom do you blame, brothers? Bow your heads down!
The sin has been yours and ours.

The heat growing in the heart of God for ages—

The cowardice of the weak, the arrogance of the strong,
the greed of fat prosperity, the rancour of the wronged, pride of race, and insult to man—

Has burst God's peace, raging in storm.*

If we were to sum up in one phrase what the major task of the present-day Christian is, we could do so by borrowing a phrase used by a Christian leader recently. That phrase is "Christian social engineering." Every new generation has its special task; whether it be the abolition of slavery, or missionary pioneering, or educational advance, or moral reform, or personal evangelism. For this generation there can be no possible doubt as to its God-given charge to "serve the present age" by applying social intelligence, empowered by religious faith, to the huge and world-wide problems of our time. But this takes brains, dedicated knowledge and skill, the will to accept the hard disciplines of study and to understand the basic human values, and how they are obstructed in our public ways. Not for us the contemplative calm of the medieval cloister, whose lives are set in these troubled and precarious times. We are compelled to live, not alone in the towns we call our homes, but on the African desert, in the frozen north, on the Burma road, over the Alps and the Himalayas, on the wide and perilous seas, in the thick of the planetary struggle.

If as Christian people we cannot, now, as the apostle says, "give a reason for the faith that is in us," then we are indeed blind guides. Why is it so hard for us to affirm with clarity, courage and faith the truth that sets men free?

*Rabindranath Tagore from "Fruit Gathering." Reprinted by permission of Macmillan.

WHAT YOU BELIEVE IS IMPORTANT

Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness;
and all these things shall be added unto you.

Luke 12:31

Many people have a habit of saying that ideas are unimportant, that only actions are worth considering. This view is particularly dangerous in a democracy, and in such a time as this. It is more necessary than ever to know what it is we are about. We must be able to give voice to our convictions.

We can see clearly how the constantly proclaimed ideas of Nazi and Fascist states lead to certain kinds of social action such as mass murder of innocent people, systematic starving of whole regions, brutal massacre and relentless persecution of Jewish people, false and vicious accusations against racial groups, destruction of churches and religious institutions generally; to name only a few of the social consequences of their doctrines.

Here is an example of Nazi beliefs taken from a book called "Bolshevism and the Bible." "The teaching of mercy and love of one's neighbor is foreign to the German race, and the Sermon on the Mount is, according to Nordic sentiment, an ethic for cowards and idiots."

We have to admit that this teaching is put into practice, is known and followed faithfully by Hitler youth and the Nazi leaders. As multitudes of young Allied soldiers, including the lads from the United States, move out to meet this gigantic evil in the world, they may be wondering what the meaning of their action is. They are to kill and be killed in this most dreadful of earth's calamities. They may ask, "What's the idea?" What is our answer to them?

Our answer must be clear and convincing, in terms of the values for which we live and for which we expect men to die. It will be an answer that takes into account, also, our own share in the common guilt of mankind that brought about the conditions leading to war. Our individual consciousness of sin,

selfishness and folly by which we betray the good in ourselves and others will temper our attitudes toward those against whom we are opposed. Only as we are able to see and to acknowledge our part in the creating of the evil against which we fight, can we get an honest view of the aims and purposes which we want to defend.

As we study the religious literature of our time, the messages of Christian preachers and teachers, we find a bewildering variety of answers. Sermons and addresses are full of phrases that have real meaning for those who speak them. There is depth and earnestness, an absence of hatred, a determination to keep the fellowship of the Christian church whole and strong even amid the strains of war. There is a mood of repentance for sins that helped to cause the war. There is hope for a better society after the war and the will to create it. There is, too, in Europe and especially in the occupied countries, a deeper note of suffering, repentance, faith. There is a more profound appreciation of the consolation of the gospel and an increased trust in the church. In nearly all of these messages, the war is described as "a judgment which God brings on the world through human wickedness,—to make us repent."

One wonders what men at the fighting front think and how their friends and families feel about these interpretations. Perhaps if we could give them a clear idea that the chance for people being able to work for freedom and justice is the stake for which they fight, it would help to create in them a sense of the worth-whileness of their sacrifice. Still more plain would be their objective if they could see the social fruits of freedom being ripened before their eyes; if we could put our own faith into action that would give them certainty and light on their perilous way. Or, if we could give to them such words about freedom as those spoken by a Norwegian pastor after German occupation of his country. "Can we be free men in spite of all the restrictions imposed? I do not remember a time when I have been so free." These are examples of important

ideas to guide, to comfort, and to show the way to action. It is not enough to protest *against* ideas and their consequences. We are obliged also to meet these destructive doctrines with deep and clear convictions, drawn from our own faith.

As with Nazi ideas and their social consequences, so it is with fascist ideas, although these are harder to track down. It is fairly easy to detect Nazi ideas. They are usually so anti-Christian and anti-Jewish that their use of religious terms does not deceive anyone. But fascism is not so easily discerned. It is everywhere, in all countries. It appears in many forms. There is political fascism, clerical fascism, economic and industrial fascism and individual practice of fascism. It is an insidious and ever-present threat to all we fight and work for. Yet have we any clear idea what fascism is? Fascism in some form is ready to take control wherever Christian democracy fails. Wherever democracy fails to insist upon mutual tolerance, equal opportunity, active goodwill among races, faiths, nations, occupational and social groups, it ceases to be democracy and becomes fascism. Fascism capitalizes on human weakness; on failure in government, in business or in any other area of life. The fascist spirit is at work wherever anti-Semitism springs up anywhere, at any time. Fascism is present where economic problems are acute and urgent. Fascism will seize the opportunity to exploit fear, prejudice and self-interest. Fascism is present where religious intolerance is permitted or where it is used to curtail religious liberty.

We may expect an increase in the applied techniques of fascism as the war goes on, and especially if there should be an economic depression in the post-war period. People should educate themselves to understand and recognize these techniques and stand ready to oppose them with the spirit of human brotherhood in active and positive ways.

We must also watch for the fascist within ourselves. The intoxication of power, the abuse of authority, the domination and coercion of other people's minds and lives; these are

found in the very best of our social institutions, and the temptation and the danger can be seen in the very best persons. Never must we forget Lord Acton's words, "All power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

In religious systems too, the danger is present. There are some theologies that, either in their complete conviction of exclusive rightness, or in the power they bestow upon an institution, or in the low view they take of the worth of the individual, are always in danger of making it easy for fascism to enter.

Recent attacks on religious freedom are sufficient to warn us that, given too great emphasis upon authoritarian religion, we might soon see religious liberty vanishing. When religious liberty is even remotely questioned, the whole case for liberalism in economics, in social problems, in industrial and labor relations, in every sensitive area of human relations, is threatened.

The democratic form of government is not in itself a guarantee of religious liberty. A democratic government can permit political activity and influence on the part of religious groups only in due proportion to that allowed to other groups. But in democracy the scope and opportunity for activity and influence by any religious group is greater than in any other kind of state. Religion, therefore, conditions to a considerable extent the social relationships, and determines the quality and even the degree of democracy in any culture in which it is freely exercised. This puts very great responsibility upon religious groups to use aright the freedom which democracy offers them.

Still another area into which fascist practices may enter, is that of the family. The characteristic marks of fascism, the will to power, the abuse of authority, the exploitation of some members of the family to gratify the ego of others, the domination of the weaker by the stronger, the assumption of unwarranted privilege at the cost of others' welfare or freedom; these are expressions of the fascist spirit, which may be reflected in the social relations of the members of a family. At its root is a

fundamental disbelief in the worth and value of the individual, and in the importance of personal relations.

We have seen that the articles of the Nazi faith are clear-cut, definite and concrete, and that they bear social fruit in harmony with the principles professed, evil as they may be. In like manner, though more difficult of detection, because so widely diffused and in so many forms, does fascism express in social action its destructive principles.

WORLD RECONSTRUCTION AND RELIGION

I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

Revelation 21:1-3

One way of seeing the social effect of certain religious ideas is to ask ourselves which of the world's religions would be an adequate religious basis for any world organization. Obviously we cannot make more than a brief reference here.

We should have to rule out Japanese Shinto because of its position as a political instrument and because of the cynical uses to which it is being put to force the Japanese people into hopeless subjection to militaristic politics on the two-fold grounds of their reverence of ancestors and Emperor. A state-cult of military terrorism bears its own bitter social fruits today.

Hinduism, a religion which has made several attempts to extend its influence outside of India, still remains an Indian religion, riveted to the land by the same powerful caste-system that holds the people in their locations, occupations, and social

state. Leaving aside the question of India's political status, there is abundant evidence to show that the social effects of Hinduism have certainly not been to promote either industrial or agricultural development. The new forces at work in India and the fast changing conditions induced by the war, will undoubtedly dissolve these bonds in time. Largely because of caste division and religious tradition, there is less response to economic motives and incentives than almost anywhere else in the world.

The numerous and now politically powerful millions of untouchables doing the most menial and ill-paid tasks offer no effective market for either agricultural or industrial products. Hinduism contains numerous types of religious thought and form but it is definitely not exportable as it stands. Its sombre accents on illusion, pain, futility, fate and world renunciation are all part of its drag upon the society it controls. Its virtues we cannot explore. Certainly it has offered a varied, rich, hospitable, deeply indigenous "design for living" for its myriads of worshippers. Yet these hardly compensate for its deficiencies in serving the needs of the people.

The chief candidates for the place of world religion are Islam, Buddhism and Christianity, all having a long record of successful international experience.

Islam has the advantage of being a real brotherhood, and of practicing democracy in its temples. Belief in one God, in the prophet, in scripture, in prayer, alms and fasting, are the ideas and disciplines that keep the brotherhood of the faith together. But the austerity, fatalism and general lack of development, together with its low estimate of women as well as other negative elements in the system, have made it less effective, even among modern Moslems, than their purely political weapons.

Buddhism in its mature and developed form is a civilizing, richly cultural faith, particularly in China, where its melancholy, life-denying elements are considerably modified by pro-

founder influences. Beauty, compassion, virtue and devotion to the personality of its great founder are its main emphases leading to positive social values. It has a world outlook and a doctrine of man grounded in the common human psychology of unfulfilled desire. But its basic pessimism is too largely unrelieved by hope, and thus the positive human values it creates tend to become meaningless.

There remains the faith identified with the culture of the western world, the Judeo-Christian faith. Having its roots in the great and noble Hebrew tradition, and drawing its forms and ideas from the best in Greek and Roman thought, it has as its centre the historic personality of its founder, Jesus Christ. Its world-view, its one God, its moral universe, its loyalty to Christ, its faith in progress through the continuous work of the Holy Spirit, its feeling of practical responsibility for human need, its rich and varied ministries and disciplines,—all mark it as distinctive among the world's living religions. Christians believe that these qualities are the hope of the world.

From the point of view of a world faith, however, with power to provide the ethical directives and spiritual dynamic for great new adventures of human living, the kind of Christianity practiced among us today suffers severe handicaps.

It may be said that every thoughtful person of serious intent gets his incentive, dynamic and direction from religious faith, though he may not necessarily call it "religious." To nourish his own inner life amid the stress and strain of external events, to reinforce his spirit when called upon to enter into difficult and exacting efforts in behalf of his fellows, to obtain a sense of direction and design in carrying on his work in society, he must have faith; a faith that gives clarity of vision, vigor and insight as he puts his life alongside the constructive and creative forces at work in the world. Upon what is that faith to be based? In whom is it to repose?

It is obviously neither possible nor desirable here to attempt to describe the varieties of religious belief and experience that

bear the common title of Christianity. It is clear, however, that as groups cooperate more and more closely on the common ground of action for individual and community betterment, they do so upon certain mutually understood assumptions which every man and woman can understand and out of which a "working" faith emerges.

Let us note some of these working principles, the dynamic and motivating elements in our common faith.

HAVE WE A "WORKING FAITH?"

We Believe in God

Bow before God in prone humility,
Till thou remember that He lives in thee;
Then lift thy head superb among the free—*

However our belief may be defined, described or experienced, we believe in one God, the creative and re-creative spirit at work in the universe, the Father of all mankind. To the sovereign power of God every man in every nation owes his ultimate loyalty and allegiance. The belief that all men are children of God is the basis for freedom of worship, for limitation of political sovereignty and for human brotherhood.

This is what the Puritans meant when, denying the tyranny of earthly monarchs, they cried, "For the sovereignty of God and the Word of God we will hazard our lives." It is what inspired Pastor Niemoller to rise in his pulpit in the last days of his freedom and meet the Nazi terror with the bold and confident assertion, "Not you, Herr Hitler, but God is my Fuehrer." This faith in the sovereign rule of God is man's best protection from the claims of political demagogues who declare themselves messiahs and saviors of the people. It is only as the people themselves acknowledge this faith, moreover, that they

*By Ernest Howard Crosby. Reprinted by permission of Funk and Wagnalls Co., New York.

are safe, on the other hand, from domination by those who pretend to mediate God's sovereignty.

Again, this belief in God as the Father of all mankind is of the utmost importance for the reality of human brotherhood. It is hard to understand upon what other grounds men will feel compelled to act as brothers. The notable failure of sentimental humanism to secure for the disinherited any perceptible gains in just and decent human relations ought to be convincing beyond all question. The only reasonable hope for a better day for the distressed and war-weary masses is the increase of faith in man's worth and value as a son of God; and action in accordance with that faith.

We Believe in a Moral Universe

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.

Romans 8:28

Man, because of his relative freedom, is morally responsible for understanding and obeying the laws of God in nature and in life. Because God's laws operate in the universe throughout nature and the life of man we, as part of that universe, are bound by the universality of its laws. If we neglect, ignore or defy those laws we are lost and we suffer the inevitable consequences. The laws of nature, of health, of safety, of right relations are immutable. We must discover and obey these laws, or suffer disaster and death. Thus God's judgment attends our ignorance or negligence, increasing the amount of human suffering in proportion to our resistance to his will and to his order for the universe. This is the basis for intelligent moral behavior, the ground of a genuine ethic, the root of all justice.

If we disregard or disobey the rules of health, we cannot escape the consequences; and we cannot in good conscience ask God's intervention to save us from the laws of nature. If the farmer disobeys the laws as to seedtime and harvest, his loss is certain, and is traceable to his own folly. Of course he may

do all he knows and still suffer loss, since other elements may enter in, but in so far as he obeys the laws, he has done his part to secure his crop.

Sometimes people say "Why doesn't God stop this war!" While we can know very little about all the complicated causes of war, and while we do not know how to determine the part God takes in the affairs of men, we can be sure that it is not in accordance with His will that men strive against one another. All we know is that when men have built the long road that leads to war there can be no way back, no escape from the consequences.

A young man left his chemistry experiment just before his final examinations to go out for some recreation. He stayed too long and the experiments were spoiled. He could not complete his work that year, so he could not receive his degree, nor could he get the job that depended on his degree, nor marry the girl to whom he was engaged because he had no job. His mother thought that God had punished her boy unduly for being late just one night, but the boy himself knew where the real blame lay. The laws of chemistry kept right on working while he neglected to make the right use of his freedom.

In all these ways then, in the processes of life and growth, of chemical reaction, of health and of human relations upon which we depend for orderly and predictable life, there are laws we must learn to understand and obey, or else we shall be shattered and broken against them.

To understand this is the beginning of ethical wisdom, the discovery of the root of moral order.

We Believe in Man

When I am myself in doubt about the philosophers I turn to the consensus of human opinion, to the beliefs of the plain man, that strange, indefinable being. If he had words in which to express himself he could tell us things worth knowing even about the greatest matters, even, I think, about the soul.*

*From "The Human Situation," by W. M. Dixon. Courtesy of Longmans, Green & Co., New York.

All men are children of God; all therefore are worthy of being valued and cherished. The worth and dignity of human beings is intrinsic by virtue of their relation to the creative spirit which is God.

Men, by the exercise of free will, may choose and do evil instead of good; are constantly liable to error and failure; are inept and inadequate to meet, unassisted, the assaults and temptations of life. Fear and self-distrust, anger and disdain, all destructive and corrosive emotions, all self-seeking and egoistic impulses, stand across the path as men struggle to survive or aspire to better ways of living. Man needs God's help, and he needs the aid of his fellows in the common struggle to achieve a better life within and without. Endowed by the Creator with "certain inalienable rights," he needs an equal chance at life's opportunities, equal access to life's goods, equal recognition and status as a human being of whatever race, nation and faith.

This is the basis for social effort and the struggle for democracy, for the right approach to problems of race, labor, class, creed and all other human antagonisms.

It is not necessary here to enter the controversial field of argument as to the sinful nature of men, the "total depravity" of human nature, or the inevitable failure of man's endeavors and striving. Nor, on the other hand, can we longer doubt that those humanitarians are mistaken who still believe in the face of all the evidence that man does not need God, or God's aid in the struggle of life. Neither of these abstract extremes offers a fruitful way of thinking for those who live closest to life's actual demands and difficulties.

Faith in the possibility of people learning to live in the same world with greater mutual respect and helpfulness is necessary to any sustained effort to create the conditions of a better life for the peoples of the earth. And faith in the active sense of God, present in the human struggle, is also necessary if there is to be any lessening of the bitterness of human conflict, or

any real hope that the races, nations and faiths will seek values that lie outside and beyond the field of their differences.

There is no more realistic view of the nature of man than that which the Bible, in its many different accents, portrays, with the emphasis upon his moral responsibility as a consequence of his relative freedom to choose between good and evil. The social consequences of his false choices throughout all the ages are dramatically and tragically present in the world today.

We Believe in "The Good Earth"

The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.

Psalm 24:1-2

We believe in the good earth and in the bounty of its resources for all mankind; that "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof"; that men and nations are custodians and guardians of its resources. This does not mean that we believe, as the Nazis and other pseudo-religionists do, that the earth has a mystic, worship-demanding quality. But rather that erosion of the soil, exploitation and exhaustion of land, devastation of forests, monopoly of mineral deposits, reckless abuse of the treasure entrusted to our keeping,—all results of greed, ignorance, destructiveness, negligence and irresponsibility,—are sins which will be "visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." Even in our time we are seeing that such misuse brings poverty, serfdom and injustice to men and women who look to the land for the bread of life and for the "healing of the nations." The belief that the rich resources of nature belong to all men alike is a cornerstone of international cooperation and economic justice.

All of the above has been said in many ways by many voices, in ancient as well as in modern times. Occasionally there have been high and hopeful moments in man's history when it

seemed as though he were about to act upon this faith. One such moment occurred last June at the United Nations Conference on Food and Agriculture. Another is occurring now at the meeting of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration at Atlantic City. There is hope in the effort to follow up these beginnings and thus to lay the foundations for a practical attempt to make "freedom from want" a reality. Yet so deep-rooted are the habits and attitudes, the fears and distrusts which hold men back, that many are in despair at the threatening tide of opposition to any real commitments which might guarantee effective long-term cooperation to this end. Only a genuinely religious interpretation of man's relation to the land and its resources on the part of the masses of mankind will produce the socially desirable results of dependence upon the goodness of the earth.

We Believe in the Reality of Evil

Let not young souls be smothered out before
They do quaint deeds and fully flaunt their pride.
It is the world's one crime its babes grow dull,
Its poor are ox-like, limp and leaden-eyed.

Not that they starve, but starve so dreamlessly;
Not that they sow, but that they seldom reap;
Not that they serve, but have no gods to serve;
Not that they die, but that they die like sheep.*

Evil embodied in persons or groups, entrenched in social systems, reinforced and empowered by wealth or political and social influence is too active and destructive to be merely "absence of the good." Evil is met as a foe wherever it causes children to hunger, disease to triumph, poverty to degrade, greed to destroy, war to devastate, hatred and ill-will to undermine the strength of men and nations. These evils are real. They are solid realities to be opposed, to be overthrown, to be faced as

*"The Leaden-Eyed," by Vachel Lindsay, from his book of "Collected Poems." Reprinted by permission of The Macmillan Co., New York.

facts with acknowledgement of our part in them. Evil divides, mutilates, destroys: it weakens and frustrates the best impulses and aspirations of men. It is strong; it is pervasive and, when it is organized, it is all-powerful. Only by the assistance of God can men overcome evil.

This is the basis for humility, repentance and the need for seeking God's help. (Note: Natural evils so-called, such as earthquakes, storms, fires, epidemics, etc., are not "evils" in the moral sense described above.)

It is seldom given to men to be confronted with a clear choice between good and evil. Life is too mixed and intricately interwoven to reveal clearly where good begins or ends,—and evil is present in almost every good. Nevertheless, since inertia may be as faulty as wrong action, we must use our best judgment in the light of conscience to determine where the lesser evil or the greater good appears to be. Then we must act accordingly. This is true in war. It is true in the complicated commercial and industrial structure, in the political realm and even in personal relations. Those who can, with any serenity, face the enormous struggle for the very life and soul of man against the powerful, organized forces of evil, without recognition of the need of spiritual reinforcement, are possessed by a singular vanity and arrogance which apparently no human tragedy can subdue.

As men see more clearly the ways in which the "powers of darkness" constantly undo and put to flight the feeble beginnings of justice and brotherhood, it becomes increasingly obvious that our need is to "put on the whole armour of God that we may be able to stand in the evil day." The words of Thomas Hardy remind us that "if way to the better there be, it exacts a full view of the worst." It is easy to under-estimate the power of evil and the reality of it, since it appears in many disarming disguises, but the devastating effects of it are present for all to see. The enemy must be acknowledged, met and fought, as a stern and terrible reality. And our own share in creating the evil does not excuse us from the struggle to overcome it.

We Believe in the Good

O, yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill,
To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;

That nothing walks with aimless feet;
That not one life shall be destroy'd,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete.*

If the evil is real, so also is the good, and in the growth and fruitfulness of the good is man's only hope. In deeds of love and kindness, in unconquerable good will, in the persistence of just, courageous, generous and humane spirits, is salvation found. The potential goodness of the common man is the hope of the world. The good may appear more slowly and work less dramatically, but it is more abiding than evil. This gives the ground for hope and faith, for courage to persevere.

In the parable of the Sower is found a source of Christian hope. The point of the parable is not so much that there will be obstructions and losses in the various adventures of the seed. The main point is that there will be a harvest, and that it will be a full and bountiful one. It is this accent on the growth of the good, the fruitfulness of the good, that distinguishes the words of Jesus. It rebukes our fearful and doubting spirits, our skepticism and cynicism, and bids us trust the process of growth. It bids us create the conditions in which growth can take place and be willing to suffer long frustration, delay and obstruction for the sake of our faith in the triumphant reality of the good.

The wife of a teacher of religion in a recent conversation said that she and her husband had felt obliged to stay at least ten years in the position they occupied in a large city church. As educators, they came to know that they must build and wait at least that long before they could feel that their work had gone deep enough and spread widely enough to bear fruit. The person to

*From "In Memoriam," by Alfred Tennyson.

whom she said this had expressed impatience that two years of work in her own position had shown so little result. She went home to read again the parable of the Sower, "But some fell on good ground and brought forth fruit, some thirty, some sixty, some a hundredfold."

This quality of patience and perseverance, in the face of discouragement and possible disaster, is especially needed today and will, perhaps, be even more imperative after the war. It requires great faith in the fruitfulness of the good to work for unpopular causes under hard and destructive circumstances.

We Believe in the Power of Great Lives

Friendless and faint, with martyred steps and slow,
Faint for the flesh, but for the spirit free,
Stung by the mob that came to see the show,
The Master toiled along to Calvary;
We gibed him, as he went, with houndish glee,
Till His dim eyes for us did overflow;
We cursed His vengeless hands thrice wretchedly—
And this was nineteen hundred years ago.

But after nineteen hundred years the shame
Still clings, and we have not made good the loss
That outraged faith has entered in His name.
Ah, when shall come love's courage to be strong!
Tell me, O Lord—tell me, O Lord, how long
Are we to keep Christ writhing on the cross!*

Among Jews, the great prophets; among Christians, the life of Jesus Christ, stand out preeminently as witness to the power of God in the life of man. In life and in death their testimony remains as indestructible evidence of the immortality of goodness, the eternal life of God in the soul of man. This is the basis for trust in the person and leadership of Jesus and for the inspiration of all who, through the centuries, have shared his

*"Calvary," by Edwin Arlington Robinson. Reprinted by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.

spirit, followed in his footsteps and counted their own lives less dear than the salvation of their fellows.

"This is the victory that overcometh the world, *even our faith.*"

Paul, a master of colourful and vivid phrases, has left us, among many such, one that never fails to sting the imagination and rouse the mind; words that thrill us like the sound of a bugle. "Now, therefore, seeing we also are compassed about by so great a cloud of witnesses—" Suddenly we see the long pageant of great and courageous spirits that through all the centuries have been bearers of the divine light and life in the souls of men. What before seemed impossible becomes now clearly possible because it already has been done. Realizing this, "hearts are brave again and arms are strong."

The power of the life of Jesus Christ lies in its redemptive quality,—power to redeem from sin and loss those who believe in the person and power of Christ. This power was gained through his willingness to suffer for his faith. The cross symbolizes the triumph of life over death, of good over evil, of the persistence of the creative and life-giving forces amid the destruction and evil that men create. All over the world today, people are suffering for their ideals. On battle fronts, in occupied lands, in underground movements, in the endurance of hunger, wounds, exile and death, men and women are demonstrating the power of the ideas and the values for which they pledge their lives.

All who, in public service or in private living—steadfast in their own integrity—bear the insults, the deprivations and the hardships imposed upon them because they are faithful to their beliefs, and have the courage to face the uncertainties and difficulties of a life that is true to the ideals they profess; these are members of the community of the great in spirit, who stand as witnesses to all that is imperishable and ultimately valuable in the human story. By them we are redeemed from cowardice and weakness, hypocrisy and futility.

IS THIS FAITH SUFFICIENT?

As we observe our world today, full of strife and bitterness, hatred, revenge, suspicion and distrust, the grand forces of evil so dominant and determined, and the small, easily-discouraged efforts to keep alive what is honest, truthful and of good report, it is clear that the great principles of our faith are only dimly seen at work among us. The high ideals which we profess are still largely in the form of hopes deferred, while the cruel actualities of man's inhumanity and injustice to his fellowman, are painfully real and present. There are many "good" individuals, but in our collective living as social units, the good is scarcely discernible. Many people have learned to apply the basic Christian ethic to their individual lives in greater or lesser degree, but the group behavior, the general social and collective ways of living are still unredeemed, even by the partial goodness of individuals.

Is Christianity still bound up with the eighteenth century? Or the fourteenth? It is appalling to note how many Christians in this "enlightened" age are no further on in their thinking about the relation between society and the individual than were Wesley's preachers 200 years ago. We still make the error, though we have had long enough since their time to learn better, of thinking of individual and society as separate. We still say, "If we can get enough good people all will be well." We know we never shall, and we know also that unless people of more than average goodness organize to give effect to what goodness they possess, their strength is wasted and the fight for the cause is lost day after day.

The early Wesleyans believed that society could be redeemed by multitudes of "saved" individuals. They did not live to see the full development of the industrial revolution with its unrestrained commercialism, nor the effects of the savageness of the profit motive operating unchecked in the new industrial towns, nor the hard materialism of the utilitarian philosophy

of the time, nor the ruthless destruction of human lives and values. But the Methodist Church and all churches learned finally that "saved" individuals do not exist. They cannot stay "saved" in an unregenerate, unredeemed society.

Since the eighteenth century we have learned new ways of using man's inventive skills in the physical and biological sciences. Yet we still suffer socially from what Dr. Shailer Mathews called "the backward pull of the outgrown good," which is only one aspect of the opposing force of evil. What is keeping us back?

Judged by its social fruits thus far, it would seem that a faith adequate to meet the demands of a new day would have to develop outlooks and attitudes far broader and more courageous than organized Christianity has yet achieved.

Hopeless and Helpless?

There is a movement of the spirit of man
Which rises at the source of all good will,
Flows outward through the channels of compassion,
And spreads across the valleys of the world
To water them, to give them life, to make them
green again.

It seems natural to people to swing violently from one extreme to the other in their thoughts and feelings. The "golden mean" is seldom found, and we are constantly kept off balance by our failure to do the kind of disciplined reflection that would save us from being "blown about by every wind of doctrine." An illustration of this tendency is our idea of the nature and possibilities of man. At one time we are over-optimistic, believing that man's knowledge and skill are sufficient for anything and his whole salvation rests in developing his great possibilities. When the stern logic of events upsets this idea, we are easily led to the other extreme,—man is helpless, his struggle is futile, he can do nothing of lasting significance in regard to his own destiny. Neither of these extremes has

ever proved really helpful to man in his search for guidance, yet, especially in times of crisis, we tend to yield to these counsels of despair. Thus, at the moment when we most need a sober and modest estimate of ourselves, we tend to become arrogant in our own power, and at the moment we most need courage and confidence, we surrender our faith in man's potentialities.

From such a cursory review of the weaknesses that discredit our Christian faith as a working principle, it becomes clear how important it is to know what one's faith is, and to re-examine it from time to time. Aristotle's words are worth recalling. "The unexamined life is not worth the living." The unexamined and only vaguely formed faith soon deteriorates; for religion needs the constant check of practical results against basic principles. Modern Christianity is being re-examined and checked against certain of its traditional dogmas, some of which may not appear to offer great help, others of which are of extreme importance. Let us then look once more at the question, *What is holding us back from adequate fulfilment of our religious faith?*

We are told that it is our hopeless and helpless depravity as human beings, an idea common in times of crisis. But is this opinion any more "realistic" than the belief that something can still be done? Pessimism about man may, if carried to excess, remove God clear away from the direct experience of men. An exaggerated humility, the over emphasis upon pride as the sole basis of sin, the neurotic revival of the doctrine of total depravity, the reduction of man, already beaten and bewildered by the storms of life, to a status hardly more than beggarly, makes one wonder what has become of man's worth and value as a son of God. Very few who hold such views could actually build a life worth living on the "foundation of unyielding despair."

Nor would men, once convinced of their helplessness, find much heart or hope for improving the conditions of human

life. Able men have disputed this point and might deny the accuracy of this reasoning, but our message is not for abstract scholars. It is for "plain people" who do not thrive on counsels of despair, and do not believe that they are meant to be the intellectual puppets of highly sophisticated Christian thought.

Part of the cynicism or despair about man comes from his perversity in repudiating the religious significance of economic doctrines. There is nothing to justify the arbitrary obstructions to a better life for the common man whose spiritual needs lie very close to food and shelter and daily work. We know how to remove these obstructions and we know where to get the instruments for their removal. The practical danger of a religiously pessimistic view of society is that it can all too easily be made a political weapon of materialism and reaction.

In Hitler's Germany this has already been done. A little juggling of words and meanings by certain writers has put the so-called Christian faith in the position of wholeheartedly supporting Hitler's movement for a "new world order." Unless we wish to renounce all part in any world order, we had better not "sell short" on what we now have, but keep alive our hope in the combined force of emerging events and the more effective work of God's people under the power of a creative faith.

Seeing Only Part of the Idea

Not in mine own, but in my neighbor's face,
Must I Thine image trace;
Nor he in his, but in the light of mine,
Behold Thy face Divine—*

Again one must stress the fact that failure to act rightly is not always due to sheer perversity. It is sometimes due to muddle-headedness; to ignorance and indolence, or "partialism" in thinking.

*"God's Likeness," by John Banister Tabb.

A striking illustration of this appears in a small but important book by Dr. Eugene Tanner, entitled "*The Nazi Christ*." Here is shown what can be done to the character of Christ when he is made to appear in the Nazi ranks. Not neo-pagans alone, but Christian churchmen in Germany are unable to see or depict Him in art forms except as a typical German. "The Christ of Art," says Dr. Tanner, "often reflects a people's weaknesses of soul and body."

This, he points out, is certainly the case with the Christ who appears in most of the Passion Plays. "He is the symbol of racial discrimination and hate. He is a tall, blonde, blue-eyed Nordic who is set upon and done to death by short, dark men who represent the Jews."

The absurdities of the racial theories devised by the National Socialists have their counterpart in our land and among American Christians. This partial view, limited by self or by race or clan or nation or creed, prevents us from seeing Christ as He may appear to others. These partial views are stereotyped in art forms, painted on windows, impressed on the mind, until it becomes unthinkable that Christ should ever look other than a European or American. Imagine, then, what mental images and impressions we carry around not only of Jesus but of all our fellowmen, especially those of other races or faiths, or even of other occupations. We probably never see them truly, but according to some image created within our minds of what a "foreigner" or a Jew, or a labor leader is like.

We need a trained and sensitive imagination to see, through art, music, speech, manner or custom, the profoundly important human being as he is, and to go with zest and eagerness to learn about him and from him, to see through his eyes and to try to think his thoughts.

Out of this kind of experience may come some of the best religious insights and discoveries.

RELIGIOUS IDEAS CAN BE BORN OF ACTION

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only,
Deluding your own selves.

For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer,
he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in
a mirror: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth
away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of
man he was.

But he that looketh into the perfect law, the law of
liberty,

And so continueth,

Being not a hearer that forgetteth but a doer that
worketh,

This man shall be blessed in his doing.

Epistle of James I:22-25

I rode one day at dawn on a street car over the bridge above San Francisco Bay. Two girls in coveralls and steel helmets, carrying workmen's dinner pails, were in the next seat. Their faces showed fatigue and strain. Their hands were stained and scarred, but there was dignity in their manner,—light in their eyes as they talked about their work, the country's need, their friends on far-away fighting fronts, their faith for a better world.

A Mexican orange picker sets his ladder against the next tree, shows you the oranges he has picked, looks at them with a kind of tenderness in his tough, young face. "Yes, the good fruit for the good men out there!" It is plain that he believes in his work and feels, through it, some kinship with the fighting men who will benefit from it.

A friend from China, naturally shy, tells with superb clarity and liberated speech of the work of the Chinese co-operatives in which she has complete faith and which gives her luminous hope. Her face glows with beauty and her words are persuasive with the expectation of great, new things to come.

An appeal is made for funds for some human need, and the American people rise almost as one in rivalry to be the first to give, to share their abundance with the earth's less fortunate. They who seemed so self-centered, so indifferent, so apathetic to all but their own interests, are touched with the flame of self-giving and discover new depths and heights of spiritual freedom.

A Negro girl comes into an eating place and is refused food by the waitress. She stands, with the stunned patience of one accustomed (to our shame, be it said) to being rebuffed and ignored. A rather plain-looking, quite insignificant woman, herself not a little fearful, moves to the counter and quietly demands that civil rights be granted a fellow citizen. She cites the law of the state, but it is the law of love that wins. Together they partake of the sacramental bread of human brotherhood. The plain woman is no longer homely. There is a new distinction about her that testifies to a quick growth in spiritual stature out of an act of common justice.

This is the way in which religious ideas and religious knowledge are born out of action. Christianity is learned, and truths about it discovered in life and in living relationships. The process is never finished. Its glory is not confined to the past. Through the ever-living spirit of God, men and women are discovering, in all parts of the world, new and existential truths. Who shall say what great new learning awaits us, what fresh unfolding of wisdom, what endowments of insight, if we carry out into action the best that we know?

But the multiplying of individual acts of justice and love, with their corresponding spiritual discoveries, will never fully meet our present need. One of the most unforgettable paragraphs in the famous Malvern Report stresses the need of realizing that the social order is not exclusively made up of the individuals now alive. It contains all the inherited attitudes passed down from many generations, embedded in customs, laws, traditions and institutions, making up great impersonal

forces which confront us with organized and corporate evil as well as good on a vast scale. Changing all the individuals now living, even if that were possible, would never overtake the task of world reconstruction. There must be collective, organized action on the part of all such "changed" individuals if we may hope to meet the resistance of evil powers entrenched in the social *mores*.

If, for instance, all churches and all religious organizations of any kind were to agree to act together, now, to remove racial inequalities and injustices from their own organizations and practices, what spiritual power could be released! What amazing new discoveries we would make of God's pure grace, and of man's capacity to receive it! Is it possible that the opposing forces could prevent the genuine and full expression of the total Christian idealism of this land once it were truly aroused and put to work?

Again, if the Christian people of the world, in their several places as employers or workers, should pledge each other, now, to put all their resources into a concrete plan for making the phrase "freedom from want" a literal fact, not waiting for new schemes to be produced but dedicating themselves and all they have to the proposition and the plan, would there not be a spiritual renewal in the life of humanity as a whole? It is not likely that a religious revival would cause this to happen, but if it were honestly willed, it would revive us from the spiritual lassitude from which we suffer. Why? Because we already know, have known for many decades, what we ought to do, and until we do it there can be no fresh outpouring of the Divine spirit. It is dishonest to expect it, and futile to work it up artificially. All sorts of devices may be tried to stir up a return to religion. There can be no genuine movement of spiritual enlightenment and renewal until we have done something about the "unfinished business" long since assigned to us.

If there is a vital connection between faith and works, as we believe, here would be found the undeniable evidence of it.

Which Comes First, Faith or Works?

We have already seen that the truly religious act tends to open new insights and to give a deeper understanding of whatever impulse or idea prompted the action. People do not always begin with a particular historic faith. They start with what they have managed to collect and do the best they can with it. Then the putting of the whole mind, the emotions and the will into an effort to act aright gives them new light, which, if reflected upon, will increase their knowledge.

In a society permeated for generations past by religious faith, both personal acts and social movements may arise without benefit of previous religious thought or exertion. Yet even so we dare not assume that the inherited supply of religious motives will last us through. In fact, we have probably already exhausted most of the spiritual wealth handed down from our forebears. It is more than high time that we set about creating new stock-piles of spiritual currency if we are to replace the impoverished stores and equip ourselves for the exacting and challenging tasks of tomorrow.

In the end, the vitality of social action will die out unless we cultivate religious experience to keep it stimulated and enlivened. To worship, to reflect, to think together is as important as to work together. All are parts of the single unified religious act.

The Christian Church affords a supreme opportunity to experience faith and works in their right relations to each other, and as part of the centralizing and unifying wholeness of the Christian life. When it fails in either of these important elements, it betrays its trust and confuses the people. Unless people can see that the collective actions of the Church are in harmony with its professions of faith, they will be bewildered and the unity of the Church fellowship will be destroyed. It is this solemn obligation to keep faith and works together that gives the Church its significance as part of the total structure of society.

We cannot hope to address ourselves to the gigantic tasks of social improvement awaiting us, in the feeble strength of weak religious impulses that reach us only by remote ancestral control. What is *our* faith for *our* day? In proportion as our economic problems are more vast and complicated than ever in the past, so must our faith increase accordingly.

The Path from Thought to Action

Clear ideas, whether learned in advance of action or as a result of action, are imperative. Generally speaking, however, the problem of getting people to act justly and responsibly is a problem of motivation. Most people in contact with Christian teaching, or even under the limitations of popular opinion today, know what ought to be done. The problem is how to get them to do what they know they ought to do, but for which they have no real, compelling motivation.

The cause of the difficulty is not merely the depravity of human nature. It is the way in which we separate religious teaching and religious experience from the learning of social obligations. Sometimes we even propose to teach religion in one place and the social application and practice of it in another. When they are kept together, learned and practiced in the same situations, the motivation is generated on the spot. The values sought, the ends to be reached, are in vital connection with the interest and effort required to carry them out. The important step of commitment is an outcome of the total experience of the whole person in loyalty to the values seen.

The House Divided

How does our faith get translated into deeds? Do we believe in the sovereignty and fatherhood of God; in men as sons of God, and therefore brothers; in a universal moral law with which we must work or against which we shall be broken; in the "good earth" whose resources we hold in custody for all men in all future generations; in the enormous and stubborn

and dreadful reality of evil; in the quietly developing fruitfulness of the good; in the inspiration of great literature and great leadership, in the power of the life and words of Jesus?

If we do, how is it that we can still go on worshipping ourselves or our kind, or our possessions; refusing to yield one jot of personal or group or national sovereignty in the interests of mankind; tolerating the shameful scandal of racial inequalities among citizens; competing for wealth, power and position; exploiting and monopolizing the resources of the land; putting our personal comfort or scruples before the fight against intolerable evils; scorning the path by which we might find the secret of the power of great lives.

This unbearable dualism within ourselves is well described by Dorothy Thompson as "a fundamental schizophrenia" to be resolved only by a definite choice of the kind of society we really want. It would be a good spiritual exercise if each of us was to write out carefully what he thinks are our best beliefs, and opposite them list the long line of human ills with which we are failing to reckon. We might discover that our ideas were too small and meagre to begin with.

When the early Hebrews first entered into covenant with God, he was known as a local diety who protected only the tribe, and could be carried in a god-car. It took a long time to develop a conception of God such as that of Isaiah or Amos or Hosea. Are we still thinking of God as the God of our tribe, our race, or our nation? Does democracy for us mean that we uphold our own culture, race, religion or philosophy to the exclusion of all others? Do we have a meagre view of man's capacity for freedom and his ability to learn to use that freedom creatively?

These are some measures of our faith, and our social action will reflect what our beliefs really are.

ADD TO YOUR KNOWLEDGE, FAITH

We men of earth have here the stuff
Of Paradise—we have enough!
We need no other stones to build
The Temple of the Unfulfilled—
No other ivory for the doors—
No other marble for the floors—
No other cedar for the beam
And dome of man's immortal dream.

Here on the paths of every-day—
Here on the common human way
Is all the stuff the gods would take
To build a Heaven, to mould and make
New Edens. Ours the stuff sublime
To build Eternity in time!*

Much of our failure too, is an unconscious lack of faith in a God whose justice and love are the laws of life. We prefer to fall back upon mystic experience, upon ritual act, or upon social method. An ethical God is hard to believe in, and still harder to serve. But the dependable moral order of the universe leaves us without excuse. God's reign of law and love must be effected, so far as our part is concerned, through ethical exertion. For our time and place what is indicated is a social righteousness far in advance of the conventional habits and customs that prevail.

Of our lack of faith in human nature and human capacities, we have spoken before. Certainly, we would have cause for despair if we had to face these grave tasks unassisted by the grace and strength of God. Because we believe this extra power is available for us, we can work in hope, with intelligent and contagious faith, being certain that "He will not fail, nor be discouraged, till He hath set justice in the earth."

To have a great and growing faith in God, in the universality of his laws of justice and love, and in the capacity of men to

*From "Skoes of Happiness," by Edwin Markham. Used by permission.

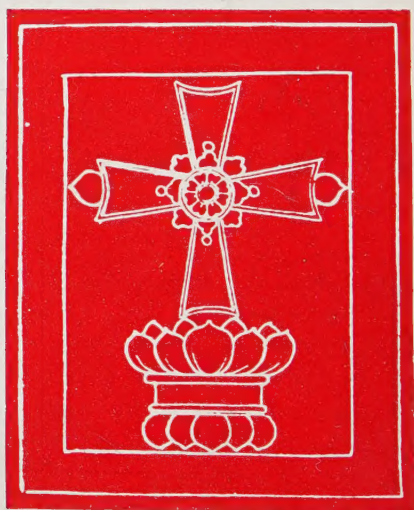
understand and live by these laws, is a firm foundation upon which to build the growing experience of persons.

All along the way, it is necessary, through devices old and new, to keep together in one whole experience the faith we profess and the actions by which this faith is constantly tested. To make large professions and large commitments which we lack knowledge or skill or courage to carry out, is to divorce faith from action, to mutilate and divide the wholeness of life, to set up inner conflicts which cannot be reconciled, and to destroy at last our confidence in the possibility of achieving good results in life.

We need the power and the inspiration of great ideals, but we can sustain these only as we lay hold of some manageable fact of life and bring that under the direction of the principles of our faith. So, bit by bit, new areas of experience are brought into harmony with our ideals, and so the "growth of the good" takes place. In order to increase our faith, we must take the obvious "next steps" in the practice of it.

The work that waits for people of courage and faith today is to venture further into the difficult and unpredictable areas of human relations and put to hard practical test the values we are "for." To do this, on all fronts, in private and public life, calls for creativity, imagination, courage, ardor and contagious faith. Those who, through the present time of trouble, are acquiring these qualities will be the ones to lead mankind toward the better world for which we all long. They will be able to light the way toward a design for human relations that will more nearly resemble the Christian imperative that men shall dwell together "in the unity of the spirit, in the bonds of peace, and in righteousness of life."





Cross (A.D. 960)

Found near Peiping at the Pagoda of the Cross (Che-tze-seu). The Cross surmounts the lotus flower, an emblem of the Buddhists.

(Reproduced through the courtesy of Professor Daniel Johnson Fleming of Union Theological Seminary. This Cross originally appeared in Professor Fleming's book, "Christian Symbols in a World Community," published by Friendship Press.)